CHAPTER IV

JEWISH MIGRATIONS

(1) CAUSES AND CHARACTER OF THE JEWISH MIGRATIONS SINCE 1800

TILL tlie end of the eighteenth century Jewish migrations in Europe, following the line of the general advance, went from West to East, but in the nineteenth century the direction of their main stream was reversed. The Jews, long settled in Southern Germany, as well as those inhabiting the late Polish provinces (which only at the end of the eighteenth century had come under Prussian dominion), started leaving their homes in increasing numbers. Improvements in communications, and especially the growth of railways, deprived the small towns of their commercial importance, and their Jews of an economic basis. Some migrated to the large towns, others to Western Europe and to overseas countries. Jewish emigration from Russia was due to a strong natural increase, and the virtual restriction of their residence to the so-called " Pale of Settlement", which comprised the ten Polish and the fifteen neighbouring Russian provinces. Even about 1800, when the Jewish population of the "Pale" was only 800,000, it was with great difficulty that they eked out an existence as merchants,

inn-keepers, or artisans. By 1900 Russian Jewry had increased to almost 5| millions, overcrowding, to an intolerable degree, the districts and professions open to them in Russia, whose economic system had developed but little in the intervening century. A Jewish emigration to the West now started from Eastern Europe, numerically far in excess of all previous Jewish migrations.